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### In this issue:

- [Welcome from Ben Sawyer](#)
- [Supporting forest resilience in a changing climate](#)
- [Enhancing forest health through strategic management](#)
- [The Noongar season, bunuru](#)

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### Welcome from Ben Sawyer

G'day Nicole

Welcome to the bunuru edition of the FMP newsletter. As you're probably aware, the new Forest Management Plan 2024–2033 (FMP 2024–2033) kicked off on January 1 this year.

On behalf of the agency, I'd like to extend my thanks to all those that provided feedback on the draft plan. The passion and knowledge for protecting our south-west forests was evident in the detail provided and we were able to incorporate some of this into the final plan.

Moving forward, the team at the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

(DBCA) are focused on doing all we can to support forest and biodiversity resilience in our changing climate, and I look forward to sharing this progress with you over the life of the plan.

The FMP 2024–2033 is pursuing new directions for forest management that meet both the socio-economic and cultural aspirations of current and future generations balanced with the environmental sustainability of the forest.

One management practice we'll be applying to achieve this is ecological thinning. This concept has been widely debated, however DBCA scientists and experienced forest practitioners have, based on all available evidence, identified it as the preferred approach to achieve a positive outcome for the forest. (You can read more about this methodology further down.)

Throughout the decade-long plan, DBCA will document its findings and share this with you via our newsletter or by publishing the results on our [website](#).

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to myself or the FMP team at [forest.info@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:forest.info@dbca.wa.gov.au).

Regards



Ben Sawyer  
Coordinator, Forest Management Plan





**Top left:** FMP team (L-R) Ben Sawyer, Angela Reimers, Jessika Allen and Veronica Wilson.

**Top right:** Tony Raudino, Senior Forest Practices Officer, describing forest health.

**Bottom left:** Imogen Halliwell-Bridge, Forest Practices Officer, discussing forest habitats.

**Bottom right:** Bull banksia (*Banksia grandis*).

## Supporting forest resilience in a changing climate

Like the rest of the globe, Western Australia's south-west is experiencing the impacts of climate change. A key objective of the new plan is to manage more than 2.5 million hectares of forests on public lands in our state's south-west to support forest and biodiversity resilience against the impacts of a drying and warming climate. Providing recreation, tourism and supporting other uses of the forest are also deliverables of the new plan.

Following the significant South West Native Title Settlement, DBCA will partner with Noongar Traditional Owners and community members to manage the conservation estate ensuring the protection of Noongar cultural heritage for generations to come.

Acknowledging the cessation of large-scale commercial timber harvesting in our south-west native forests, the new FMP adds more than 400,000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests to WA's nature reserves, national parks and conservation parks. This will bring our protected/reserved forest estate within the FMP area to almost two million hectares.





Following the EPA assessment, the Minister for Environment approved the FMP based on certain conditions including establishing a scientific research program to investigate the impacts of fire management strategies and bushfires on forest ecosystems and biodiversity. Research findings will inform decisions regarding prescribed burning, and the balance between safeguarding biodiversity without compromising the broader responsibilities of prescribed burning.

The FMP 2024–2033 has a commitment to transparency and accountability. Rigorous reporting mechanisms, scheduled at years five and ten, are in place to evaluate the plan's progress. This includes the protection of south-west forest biodiversity and upholding commitments to the recently formed Noongar corporations.

For more information visit the [Forest Management Plan webpage](#) or contact the [FMP team](#).

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## Enhancing forest health through strategic management

One of the foundations of the FMP 2024–2033 is to use a range of active and adaptive management strategies. These approaches aim to increase the resilience of forest ecosystems against the detrimental impacts of invasive pest animals, weeds, plant disease, high intensity bushfires, human use, and the cumulative effects of climate change.

DBCA will introduce an ecological thinning program of up to 8,000 hectares annually. This initiative, supported by ongoing research, intends to enhance resilience to drought, heatwaves and bushfires, while also contributing to long-term carbon storage.

Targeting primarily younger regrowth jarrah and karri forests as well as mining rehabilitation areas, the selection of candidate areas for thinning is informed by a thorough



assessment of observed and projected changes in rainfall, groundwater trends and forest condition. Proposed thinning activities will prioritise the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in consultation with Noongar people.

The ecological thinning operations will be rigorously assessed and managed through the agency's disturbance approval system (DAS). DAS provides a comprehensive checklist of environmental and cultural assessment questions in line with the seven [Montréal criteria](#), ensuring a thorough evaluation of all relevant factors associated with a proposed disturbance.

To facilitate this process, DBCA's Ecosystem Health and Forest Management branches are developing new silvicultural guidelines for ecological thinning that are translated into operational procedures. Drawing on decades of experimental research on forest hydrology and stand growth responses, the shift towards promoting long-term forest health, resilience and biodiversity conservation outcomes necessitates the development of new and specific guidelines for each forest category.

Given the imperative to address climate challenges through ecological thinning, interim guidelines will steer initial operations. These guidelines are available on the [FMP website](#) and scientific knowledge gained through research and trials will be disseminated through departmental reports or publications.

The success of ecological thinning will be measured through comprehensive monitoring to assess its effects and making necessary adjustments over time. This involves gauging the consistency of application with silvicultural guidelines and monitoring indicators of forest health, such as vegetation composition and fauna inhabitation, as well as hydrological changes over time.

The first forest enhancement area (FEA) consists of approximately 220 hectares of the Warren forest block near Manjimup.

For further details on DBCA's annual ecological thinning plan, please visit our [website](#).



## The Noongar season, bunuru

Noongar artist, Linda Loo, created an original artwork for the FMP 2024–2033. She is a Noongar woman born in Corrigin and connected to the Balladong/Whadjuk clans of the Noongar Nation. The Noongar Nation is located in the south-west of Western Australia.

Below is Linda Loo's description of the season of bunuru, the second summer from February to March.

*"Bunuru is the hottest part of the year with little to no rain and hot easterly winds with a cool sea breeze in the afternoon.*

*Noongar people lived along the coast, rivers and estuaries and their diet consisted mainly of freshwater fish and seafood.*

*Bunuru is a time of the white flowers in bloom especially jarrah, marri and ghost gum. Also a time to look out for the female zamia (Macrozamia riedle) a much larger plant than its male counterpart, the huge cones emerge from the centre of the plant with masses of cotton wool like substance.*

*As the hot and dry weather continues, the zamia seed cones change colour from green to*

*bright red indicating they are ripening and becoming more attractive to animals, particularly the emu, that will eat the toxic fleshy out layer of the plant.*

*Bunuru is also known as the 'season of adolescence'."*

You can see more of Linda Loo's stunning artwork on her website, [Linlelu Arts](#).



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DBCA acknowledges the Noongar people as the Traditional Owners within the Forest Management Plan area in the south-west of Western Australia and respects the continuing connection and importance of forests to their cultural, physical and spiritual health.





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